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Testing Programs in CIA
Report of an Interview with [REDACTED]
Chief of Testing and Assessment

21 January, 1952
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All of the current testing programs in CIA have their roots in the psychological staff assessment program of OSS, which was based on the British setup for evaluation of intelligence officers. By 1945 this OSS assessment program had become part of SSU, but during that year it was greatly curtailed, so much so that only four psychologists were remaining on the staff by 1946. During that summer, however, an expansion was authorized, providing for a staff of 12 to service the whole of OIG. By order of [REDACTED] an assistant director, the work of this assessment staff was restricted first to OO and OSO, and later, in the spring of 1947, to OSO alone.

Because there was a widespread feeling that OSO had reached the peak of its activities and that there would be few new agents to select and process, the Assessment Unit of its Training Staff was abolished in May, 1947. On paper half was turned over to the personnel branch of OSO, and half to the Agency as a whole for absorption; but in actuality the program was killed outright, because the trained psychologists left the Agency. This throttling was the culmination of a long simmering conflict between professional psychological personnel involved in the program itself, and the administrative staffs of the offices concerned.

In the winter of 1947-48, some start toward resurrection of the program was made when the Training Staff of OSO obtained permission to assess men whom it was hiring as instructors. Somewhat later the covert operating divisions obtained the signature of an order authorizing this Staff to conduct assessment of covert field operators if it had sufficient time after accomplishment of its other duties.

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Meanwhile OPC had been formed (in 1948) and was desirous of access to some of the OSO services. Soon OPC began to use the OSO training course for its own officers, and then it got itself on the list of offices for which assessments could be made if the Training Staff had time after completion of its other duties. In the fall of 1948 Wisner initiated the formulation of a plan for an assessment staff to serve all of the covert offices. Though [REDACTED] a chief opponent of assessment, had left, [REDACTED] the man who replaced him, hated the idea almost as vehemently; so the matter was dropped.

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In 1949, however, [REDACTED] an assistant director, directed that all training evaluation reports---training evaluation being a semi-assessment program which had grown up within the Training Staff of OSO, an analysis based on test scores and written reports from instructors---be submitted to him for review. He had become particularly interested in this phase of the selection problem upon seeing the unfavorable assessment reports on two high level professional employees who had been selected for overseas duty, but proven unworthy of the posts as a result of the training course.

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This incident left [REDACTED] at least partially convinced of the worth of assessment; so Wisner's plan was put through while [REDACTED] was still new and uninfluenced by the attitudes toward assessment held by some of the other administrative officials.

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In May, 1949, then, the Assessment Unit was recreated, but to serve both OSO and OPC. [REDACTED] headed the unit, which was administratively responsible to the Training Staff, but which received its policy directions from a joint OSO-OPC board. [REDACTED] soon replaced [REDACTED] as head of the OSO Training Staff, and then this too became a joint service, responsible to both of the major covert offices. By January, 1951, the new Assessment Unit had 26 positions authorized, 24 of which were filled by competent and trained personnel, only two remaining unfilled.

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Late in 1950 Col. Baird joined CIA as Director of Training. There ensued a dispute between him and [REDACTED] as to whether or not the covert training and assessment program should be under the jurisdiction of the former. In January, 1951, the Office of Training was established, and by summer of that year [REDACTED] had left the Agency, and covert training came officially under Col. Baird's authority.

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Back in 1947, after the abolishment of the old OSS assessment program, an Army sergeant named [REDACTED], a friend of [REDACTED], came to CIA to set up a battery of tests for the pre-selection testing of clerical and lower ranking professional personnel. Because [REDACTED] was not a psychologist, his test battery was inadequate in many respects. At the present time [REDACTED] who came to the Agency in 1949, heads this personnel pool and testing program. Although [REDACTED] is a psychologist, he has not made any changes in the testing setup, so his inherited battery of tests is still in use. The survey made in 1951 by the Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey, may mean the instigation of changes in the program, as it did suggest specific areas for improvement.

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The hope currently held by many in charge of these various phases of the testing services of CIA is that all may be combined into a Training Assessment and Evaluation Staff. [REDACTED] feels that such a development is inevitable because of the ever increasing importance of psychology in various phases of Agency work. The Career Development Program is another current development of importance. This long range total Agency program is directed by a Career Service Committee headed by Col. Baird and [REDACTED] and on which two other high level Agency employees also serve.

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Although the Educational Testing Service report indicates the bulk of the testing activities now in operation within the Agency, Dr. [REDACTED] enumeration of current projects under the jurisdiction of his office may be helpful:

(1) Testing to help determine the selection of professional trainees -- Four tests are given applicants for the training program, tests of logical reasoning, basic number skills, verbal intelligence, and mental speed. These are particularly valuable, because applicants can be scored in relation to norms established for college graduates.

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(2) Testing of the professional trainees for purposes of vocational guidance. Upon the basis of a summary of these test results and of an interview with [REDACTED], these trainees are placed at the end of their Intelligence School course.

(3) Testing of the UTGA group* to determine the nature of their training, and also placement in the Agency upon completion of training.

(4) Pre-instruction testing of administrative and clerical personnel, and then follow-up tests to determine the worth of the training given them

(5) Testing of all people for whom Georgetown Language Institute training has been recommended.

(6) Conversational fluency testing of personnel for whom conversational language training has been prescribed.

(7) Work on the employee evaluation forms which are an important phase of the Career Development Program in its long range phases. (More information on this program can be obtained from a 7 August study by the Office of Training.)

(8) A continuous process of validation and study of all the tests used in the above mentioned projects.

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* UTGA, Unclassified Training Group A, is a segment of the Office of Training which holds professional personnel selected for specific spots in the Agency until clearance can be completed. During their attachment with UTGA these people are given tests upon the basis of which their programs are planned. Some receive language training, experience in report writing, interviewing, etc. Since most of the UTGA personnel are hired for specific vacancies in the Agency, their placement is a matter of course. But in some cases placement is determined on the basis of the tests and training received while in the group.

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